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ABSTRACT

Student affairs professionals have recognized the importance of physical environment to students' total development and have implemented strategies to enhance the territorial behavior of dormitory residents. However, little research has been done to assess the effectiveness of residence hall personalization programs which allow students to paint and decorate their rooms. A survey of 159 colleges and universities revealed that although most colleges had done no formal evaluation, 38% indicated that damage to public areas had decreased and 62% indicated that their retention rate had increased or remained the same. Fifty percent noted an increased cohesiveness among residents on floors with personalization programs. Personalization of the residence hall was equally accepted by both sexes in all dormitories. In general, the more freedom students had in personalizing their space, the higher their level of territorial behavior. The findings suggest that more and improved assessment techniques are needed to understand the impact of residence hall personalization programs. (JAC)

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THE APPLICATION OF TERRITORIALITY: ITS SCOPE AND IMPACT

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This author would like to thank those members of the American College Personnel Association's Commission III and specifically the core producers of the Territoriality Task Force who supported this project. A special thanks is also given to those institutions which shared information on their personalization programs. Above all, appreciation is expressed to Roger Sorochty who collaborated with this author on the survey and reported the initial data of the project.

THE APPLICATION OF TERRITORIALITY: ITS SCOPE AND IMPACT

With the emphasis on student development in higher education, student affairs professionals, particularly those in student housing, have recognized the importance of the physical environment as it influences the student's total development. With this in mind, resident educators across the nation have implemented strategies to enhance the territorial behavior of residents. One such strategy has been the development of comprehensive residence hall personalization programs. Primarily, these programs have allowed students to personalize their living environments. This has been accomplished by encouraging residents to paint, construct, and decorate in their individual rooms and/or group space.

There has been a relative void of research and evaluation which provides data identifying the extent of personalization and its impact. Individual program evaluations and small scale surveys have been conducted on a limited basis. Results from projects which have been reported by Hansen and Altman (1976), Schroeder (1978), and Smith (1978) indicate that personalization programs have been implemented in a variety of forms and have in varying degrees increased student satisfaction, retention, growth and interaction while decreasing residence hall damages and roommate conflicts.

To gain more specific information on this topic, the Territoriality Task Force of Commission III (Student Resident Programs) of the American College Personnel Association surveyed institutions of higher education to assess the scope and impact of personalization programs. The purpose of this project was to add to the territoriality data base, to provide comparative data for evaluation purposes to those institutions which have implemented personalization programs, and to provide information that would serve as a guide for implementing personalization programs. This paper will report the Territoriality Task Force's survey results and discuss the implications of those results.

METHOD

In 1980 a survey was conducted by the Territoriality Task Force of Commission III of the American College Personnel Association. The Residence Hall Questionnaire consisted of 58 items divided into five content areas: Institutional Demographic Data, Policies and Procedures, Student Room Personalization, Public Area

Personalization, and Program Outcomes. The questionnaire was distributed to 300 institutions across the nation and in Canada. The majority of these institutions had been identified as having established some form of territoriality. The survey solicited 159 responses, or 55% of the total sample.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

An analysis of the institutions responding is shown below. It should be noted that 78% were from ACPA Regions Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

Region	States in Region	Number of Institutions Responding
1.	Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta	3
2.	Nevada, California, Alaska, Hawaii	3
3.	Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico	7
4.	North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Manitoba	12
5.	Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana	22
6.	Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Ontario	35
7.	New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Delaware, Maritime Provinces	42
8.	West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky	24
9.	Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida	11
	TOTAL (N)	159

Public institutions accounted for 67% of the sample while 33% were private. Of those institutions responding, 9% were two-year colleges, 32% were four-year colleges, and 59% were four-year universities. The housing capacity of these institutions was:

Number of Institutions	Housing Capacity
39	1,000 or less
54	1,000 - 3,000
29	3,000 - 5,000
30	5,000 - 10,000
7	10,000 or more

On 159 of the campuses responding, or 74%, the residence halls had an average age between 11 and 20 years with 34 institutions having an average age of over 20 years, while only 7 had an average age of less than 10 years.

RESULTS

Data tabulation indicates that institutions have implemented residence hall personalization programs in a variety of forms. The divergence found in these programs in some degree stems from the reservations which student affairs administrators, business officers, and physical plant personnel have in accepting comprehensive personalization programs. In this regard, 39% of the sample indicated that their personalization program was accepted with reservations, while only 46% of the sample indicated their program was accepted readily. As was expected, the largest percentage of institutions (56%) indicated that the person most influential in gaining approval for the institution's personalization program was the Director of Housing.

In the section on policies and procedures, the data suggests that residential life professionals have been able to have personalization programs accepted by way of establishing certain guidelines which govern personalization efforts. Specifically, a set of written guidelines and procedures were utilized by 82% of the institutions. It is of interest that 26 or 18% of the institutions indicated that they had no written policies guiding their personalization programs. However, 91% of the institutions indicated that prior approval was necessary before residents could initiate personalization projects in resident hall rooms. Final approval for projects in rooms was granted by the resident director in 50% of the institutions, and in 35% of the programs this approval was given by a central office staff member. Once the projects in the rooms were completed, 87% of the institutions required a final inspection and 55% of these inspections were conducted by the resident director.

In personalization projects in public areas, 93% of the institutions indicated that prior approval was required. The approval was the responsibility of a central housing office staff member in 49% of the institutions while the hall resident director granted this approval in 28% of the programs. Once the project was completed in public areas, 92% of the institutions required a final inspection which was done by the central office staff member if 45% of the cases and by the hall resident director in 34% of the cases.

As stated earlier, a variety of approaches have been used to implement personalization programs. This diversity in programs has afforded residents varying degrees of freedom to personalize their living space. This variety can be found by interpreting the data pertaining to room personalization activities. Of the institutions responding, 36% indicated that in student rooms residents were permitted to paint only one color throughout, while 64% indicated that students were given the freedom to paint with multi-colors. Further results indicating the divergence of personalization activities allowed in rooms can be found below:

Student Room Personalization Activity	Breakdown of Permission by Percentages	
	% Yes	% No
Murals	36	64
Graphics	36	64
Paint with limited colors	37	63
Paint graphics or murals with limited colors	25	75
Use only paint provided by institution	59	41
Panel walls	22	78
Hang wallpaper	8	92
Refinish furniture	9	91
Build sleeping lofts	61	39
Texture ceilings	6	94
Replace fixtures (ceiling, add drawers, etc.)	13	87
Mount wall hangings	60	40

The next section of the questionnaire dealt with the types of personalization activities which were permitted in public areas, such as hallways, lounges, kitchens, and bathrooms. Sixty-one percent of the programs allowed residents to paint public areas and 71% of these indicated that murals were permitted, whereas 68% permitted the painting of graphics. In comparison to the activities allowed in student rooms, there was a distinct decrease in the number of activities permitted in the public areas. Public area personalization activities are analyzed below:

Public Area Personalization Activity	Breakdown of Permission by Percentages	
	% Yes	% No
Paint public areas with limited colors.....	42	58
Paint murals and graphics with limited colors.....	47	53
Replace light fixtures.....	7	93
Texture ceilings or install a suspended ceiling.....	3	97
Install paneling.....	10	90
Refinish woodwork (doors, tables, etc.).....	10	90
Install floor covering (new tile, carpet, etc.).....	15	85
Build their own lounge furniture.....	29	71

Sixty-three percent of the institutions provided paint for student use in personalizing rooms and 55% provided paint to be used in personalizing public areas. Eighty-nine percent of those institutions providing students with paint allotted no more than two gallons per room. By far, the most frequently used paint in both room and public areas was flat latex water base.

Next, the data assessed whether institutions provided residents with the opportunity to learn technical skills through seminars on the subject of the personalization of living space. The results indicated that while many institutions had personalization programs, only 29% taught necessary skills and competencies in painting, furniture construction, etc. Furthermore, 38% of the institutions provided tools for renovation, but only 8% of the institutions made shop space available for students to construct furniture, etc.

One of the most significant sections of the survey was the assessment of the outcome of the personalization program; specifically, was the program having a positive impact on residence hall students? This assessment of program impact was made in several dimensions. In reference to public area damage, 50 institutions or 38% of the total indicated that public area damage had decreased while 9% indicated that damage had remained the same. Sixty-seven institutions

or 52% had not measured the impact of the program on public area damage. It is significant to note that only one institution indicated public area damage had increased.

The next question dealt with the effect of the program on the retention rate in residence halls. In response to this question, 62% of the institutions indicated that their retention rate had increased or remained the same, while 48% of the institutions indicated the rate had not been measured.

In responding to the frequency of discipline cases, the respondents indicated that in 57% of the institutions this dimension had not been measured. Fourteen percent of the institutions reported that discipline cases had decreased. Only 5% indicated an increase in cases while 23% indicated no change.

In determining the perceived level of residence satisfaction with the residence hall environment as a result of the program, 68% of the institutions indicated that the perceived level of satisfaction had increased while only 6% indicated that it had remained the same. It is significant to note that no institutions reported a decrease in resident satisfaction, however 26% of the institutions had not measured the satisfaction level.

The next question indicated whether or not student living groups on floors with personalization programs demonstrated more cohesion, mutuality, and concern for one another. Fifty percent of the institutions indicated that there was a positive increase in these dimensions. Only 1% indicated a decrease in these dimensions, while 49% showed no observable changes.

The survey results indicated that the impact on academic performance due to a personalization program was found to be insignificant. Eighty-nine percent of the institutions had not measured this dimension. Only 2% of the institutions indicated that grades had increased and 9% indicated they had remained the same. There was no report of grades decreasing.

In measuring the level of student involvement in personalization activities, 22% of the respondents indicated that residents of women's halls were more involved than the residents of men's halls, while 14% indicated that the men were more involved than the women in the program. Seven percent of the institutions indicated that co-ed halls tended to be more involved. More significantly, it was noted by 57% of the institutions that no difference had been found between sexes in involvement, in that the program was equally accepted by both sexes in all residence halls.

The final dimension considered was how a personalization program affects the public relations image of the residence hall program. Thirty-eight percent of the institutions indicated that this had not been measured. On the other hand, 49% of the institutions reported that the public relations image of the residence hall program had increased, whereas only 14% indicated it had not changed.

Lastly, the survey indicated that 89% of the institutions had not formally evaluated or conducted research to measure the success, effect, or impact of the personalization program, while only 2% had done any assessment and only 8% had assessments in progress.

FURTHER DATA INTERPRETATION

Further data interpretation was made comparing the numbers of positive (yes) responses given to "Student Room" personalization activities and "Public Area" personalization activities to the responses of "Program Outcomes." A brief reporting of this data is summarized as follows.

The impact of the personalization program on damage was ascertained by cross tabulating the number of "yes" responses found in the student room section to the amount of damage experienced. Ten institutions responded "yes" to all six questions in the first part of the student room section with 40% indicating that damage had decreased while 60% indicated it had not been measured. Of the 72 institutions who responded "yes" to between three and six of the questions in the student room section, 32 said damage had decreased while 40 indicated that it had not been measured.

Damage was also analyzed in comparison to the public area section. Of the 48 institutions who responded "yes" to all five questions dealing with painting in public areas, 27 indicated that damage had not been measured, while 17 indicated that damage had decreased, and only 4 indicated that it had remained the same.

A very similar trend was seen when comparing the activities other than painting in public areas with the issue of damage. Interestingly enough 100 institutions did not give "yes" responses to the questions in the public area section of the survey which covered activities other than painting. This indicates that there was a break point in public areas which permitted varying degrees of painting but not many options for other types of activities.

When comparing the entire student room category with the entire category of public area activities, there were only 13 institutions which did not give any response in the student room category, which compares to 37 institutions without any "yes" responses to public area activities. There the questionnaire seems to indicate that more institutions permit a variety of activities in student rooms as compared with the public areas.

While the impact of the personalization program on damage seemed to be fairly concise, there was a much less identifiable trend in the relationship that a personalization program had on the retention rate of students. For example, of the ten institutions which responded "yes" to all six questions involving painting in student rooms, six said that the retention rate had not been measured. This response was very similar in the public area category of the survey. Based on this it seems that careful assessment should be done to determine the relationship between a personalization program and retention trend.

In analyzing the impact a personalization program had on the perceived level of satisfaction of students, the data was much more conclusive. There seemed to be a direct relationship between an increase in the perceived level of satisfaction and the number of "yes" responses to questions in the student room and public area sections of the questionnaire. For example, of the 100 institutions that responded "yes" to between two and six of the 13 questions in the student room section of the survey, 61 indicated that the perceived level of satisfaction had increased, while only six said it had remained the same. Again, a very similar relationship was seen in comparing this variable to "yes" responses in the public area category.

The relationship to students' grades and the impact of a personalization program was virtually untouched in this survey. Very few institutions assessed the impact of the personalization program on the students' grades.

The data was somewhat more conclusive in comparing the impact of a personalization program on the level of cohesion, mutuality and concern for one another. The data in fact offered some anticipated inferences. Specifically, student room activities had little if any impact on these outcome dimensions. For example, of the 100 institutions which responded "yes" to between two and six of the 13 questions in the student room section, 46 saw no observable change. On the other hand, of the 100 institutions which responded "yes" to between two and six of the 11 public area activities, 47 felt that the program had a positive

impact on this outcome dimension. This is in the direction that one would anticipate, since the dimensions of cohesion, mutuality and concern for one another would seem to be ones dealing with the group as a functioning unit more so than individuals in rooms.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this project indicate that an increasing number of institutions are implementing personalization programs in varying degrees. Based upon personalization program guidelines enclosed by institutions returning the questionnaire, programs can be divided into three categories:

General Freedom programs allow for maximum initiative and creativity by students in personalizing space. Included in this category are institutions which encourage multi-colored graphics and murals in both rooms and public space. Paint is offered in a variety of colors at no cost to residents and can be ordered for each room as often as once a year. In addition, many institutions have permitted the construction of furniture (i.e., lofts, bunks) under prescribed safety regulations. In this category, paneling in rooms, lounges and study areas as well as wall decorations (i.e., nets, cork boards, sports equipment, etc.) are allowed.

Limited Freedom programs allow students to personalize residence hall space but on a more limited basis. Residents are furnished a specified choice of paint colors and are not allowed to paint without prior approval of a predetermined residence hall staff member. Public space can be painted, preferably in solid colors; in many instances, however, graphics are allowed upon prior approval of design. In some cases, rooms can be painted every year but more often, every other year. Many institutions allowed construction of lofts and bunks.

Restricted Freedom programs allow for personalization utilizing much stricter guidelines. A very limited number of paint colors are allowed, sometimes only two. Rooms can be painted in a single color, or for a contrast, one wall can be painted in a coordinated color to match the remaining walls. Rooms can be painted no more than once every other year and public areas are painted only by the institution. Some institutions allowed the construction of bunks and lofts on a limited basis.

Seventy institutions returned a copy of their residence hall personalization guidelines. Based upon the categories delineated above, the guidelines were

placed in the category which best defined their program. Nineteen percent of the institutions allowed and encouraged general freedom in personalizing of space, however the majority of institutions, or 56% of those categorized, indicated that the freedom to personalize was limited. The report also indicated that 25% of the programs were much more conservative, allowing a very restrictive personalization opportunity.

In conclusion of all the information provided in the data generated in this project, two points stand out. First, the greater the degree of freedom a student has in controlling and personalizing institutional space, the higher the level of territorial behavior exhibited by the student. The findings of this project indicate that increased student satisfaction, retention, growth and interaction, together with reduced damages and roommate conflicts, are outcomes experienced in varying degrees by institutions which have implemented personalization programs.

Secondly, there is a tremendous need to improve the assessment techniques and the degree to which institutions are involved in assessing the impact of personalization programs on a variety of physical and interpersonal dimensions. This is becoming increasingly critical as residence hall personnel are required to justify expenditures, both human and financial, in developing personalization programs.

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